

French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization

Public Involvement Policy

Adopted by the Transportation Advisory Committee

January 15, 2004

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1. Introduction

Overview

The French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization's (FBR-MPO's) Public Involvement Policy is an umbrella policy, encompassing the plans and programs of the Urban Area's transportation planning process. Public involvement is an integral part of the FBRMPO's planning efforts. The Public Involvement Policy is comprised of the public involvement programs for all the major planning activities, including the Long Range Transportation Plan, the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP), the Air Quality Conformity Determination (if needed), the Congestion Management Plan, the Planning Work Program (PWP) and the MPO's provisions for the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The FBRMPO will seek public input through a menu of techniques, including public notices, comment periods, workshops, charrettes, public hearings, newsletters, surveys, media relations, and the use of committees and work groups with citizen representatives as appointed. The techniques employed will vary, depending on the specific planning task. The MPO will hold a forty five (45) day public comment period for amendments to the Public Involvement Policy and will seek input and feedback on the MPO's public involvement efforts. The FBRMPO's Public Involvement Policy will be consistent with the requirements of the following:

- Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA);
- TEA-2 1;
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA);
- Interim FTA/FHWA Guidance on Public Participation.

Purpose

The purpose of the FBRMPO Public Involvement Policy is to create an open decision making process whereby citizens have the opportunity to be involved in all stages of the transportation planning process. This Policy is designed to ensure that transportation decisions will reflect public priorities.

Objectives

1. Bring a broad cross-section of the public into the public policy and transportation planning decision-making process.

2. Maintain public involvement from the early stages of the planning process through detailed project development.
3. Use different combinations of public involvement techniques to meet the diverse needs of the general public.
4. Determine the public's knowledge of the metropolitan transportation system and the public's values and attitudes concerning transportation.
5. Educate citizens and elected officials in order to increase general understanding of transportation issues.
6. Make technical and other information available to the public.
7. Establish a channel for an effective feedback process.
8. Evaluate the public involvement process and procedures to assess their success at meeting requirements specified in the ISTEA, TEA-2 1, NEPA and the Interim FTA/FHWA Guidance on Public Participation.

Policy Elements

The FBRMPO's Public Involvement Policy is comprised of a number of sub-policies. All planning programs and activities are required to go through the Transportation Advisory Committee's public process. In addition, the MPO will initiate public involvement programs for the Long Range Transportation Plan, the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP), the Air Quality Conformity Determination (if needed), the Congestion Management Plan, the Planning Work Program (PWP) and the MPO's provisions for American with Disabilities Act (ADA). The final component of the Public Involvement Policy is the policy review element designed to ensure that the programs are meeting their goals.

The French Broad River MPO's Public Involvement Policy is designed to be consistent with the requirements of ISTEA, TEA-2 1, NEPA and the Interim FTA/FHWA Guidance of Public Participation.

Transportation Advisory Committee

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) - The Transportation Advisory Committee is the policy and decision-making body for the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization. The TAC is comprised of elected and appointed officials:

- Two members of the Asheville City Council;
- Two members of the Buncombe County Commission;
- Two members of the Haywood County Commission;
- Two members of the Henderson County Commission;
- One member of the Black Mountain Board of Aldermen;
- One member of the Biltmore Forest Board of Commissioners;
- One member of the Town of Canton Council;
- One member of the Town of Clyde Council;
- One member of the Village of Flat Rock Village Council
- One member of the Town of Fletcher Town Council;
- One member of the City of Hendersonville City Council;
- One member of the Town of Laurel Park Town Council;
- One member of the Town of Maggie Valley Town Council;
- One member of the Town of Mills River Town Council;
- One member of the Montreat Board of Commissioners;
- One member of the Town of Waynesville Board of Aldermen;
- One member of the Weaverville Town Council;
- One member of the Woodfin Board of Aldermen;
- One Division 13 Representative of the North Carolina Board of Transportation;
- One Division 14 Representative of the North Carolina Board of Transportation; and
- The Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration or his/her representative (non-voting)

Regular Public Involvement Opportunities

The TAC holds advertised meetings on a regular schedule. These meetings are open to members of the public and, upon request, anyone can be placed on the TAC mailing list. At the beginning of each regular meeting, the TAC provides time to receive public comments as a set part of its agenda.

Public Involvement for Specific Planning Items

For particular planning issues (i.e. plan development & updates, studies, amendments to planning documents, etc.), the TAC will open a public comment period (3-6 weeks depending on the item) and hold a public hearing. The notice for the public comment period and the public hearing are advertised using the following resources:

- Asheville Citizens-Times
- Mountain Express
- UNCA Banner
- Black Mountain News
- Hendersonville Times News
- Asheville Government Channel TV
- Buncombe Government Channel TV
- Haywood Government Channel TV
- Henderson Government Channel TV
- Henderson County E-newsletter
- City of Asheville Home Page
- City of Asheville E-newsletter
- MPO Home page
- The Smoky Mountain News
- Enterprise Mountaineer

The notices will include an announcement that states that persons with disabilities will be accommodated. Special provisions will be made if notified 48 hours in advance (i.e. having available large print documents, audio material, someone proficient in sign language, a translator or other provisions as requested). Both written and oral comments received are compiled by the planning staff and reviewed by the TAC.

Response to Public Comment

The TAC typically acknowledges public comments in one of the following two ways: The TAC may incorporate a summary of public comments and the MPO's response, as an appendix, into the specific planning document. Or depending on the number of comments, the TAC may instruct the planning staff to respond directly by letter. Acknowledging public comments is a

way to let the public know that its comments are being addressed and is part of the public involvement feedback process.

2. Transportation Plan

Minimum Transportation Plan Public Involvement Procedure

The French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization will provide opportunity for meaningful public involvement in the development and update of the Long Range Transportation Plan. The public comment period will be for a minimum 30-day period, effective from the date of the public notice publication. Written comments will be received during the comment period and will be directed to the FBRMPO. The FBRMPO's contact person, phone number and e-mail address will be included in the public notice. The FBRMPO will assemble all comments and forward comments to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC shall hold at least one public hearing for the Transportation Plan.

The availability of the Plan will be publicized using the following resources:

- Asheville Citizens-Times
- Mountain Express
- UNCA Banner
- Black Mountain News
- Hendersonville Times News
- Asheville Government Channel TV
- Buncombe Government Channel TV
- Haywood Government Channel TV
- Henderson Government Channel TV
- Henderson County E-newsletter
- City of Asheville Home Page
- City of Asheville E-newsletter
- MPO Home page
- The Smoky Mountain News
- Enterprise Mountaineer

Purpose of Public Involvement Process

The purpose of the public involvement policy is to develop and implement strategies to inform and involve citizens in the development and update of the Long Range Transportation Plan

(LRTP). Public ownership of the Transportation Plan: the goal of the program is to ensure that policy decisions will reflect the values, needs, and priorities of those affected by the decisions (i.e. the general public).

The public review and participation process is designed to provide adequate opportunities for citizens and public officials to be involved in the FBRMPO, LRTP development. The public participation is designed to provide gradual progression from the general information (such as vision setting and / or formulation of goals, objectives and policies) pertaining to the plan to specific information regarding alternatives and plan selections. Each public forum or input technique will use information collected at previous "forums" in order to build progression concluding with the adoption of the Transportation Plan.

Objectives

1. Encourage citizens to take a proactive role in the development of Transportation Plans.
2. Bring a broad cross-section of members of the public into the public policy and transportation planning decision-making process.
3. Educate the public and elected officials in order to increase public understanding of both the options and the constraints of transportation alternatives.
4. Determine public concerns/perceived impacts of elements of the Transportation Plan.
5. Determine which elements of the Long Range Transportation Plan would support or diminish the citizens' desired lifestyle.
6. Establish a channel for an effective feedback process.

Optional Public Involvement Techniques (Long Range Transportation Plan)

As a method for increasing public involvement and participation in the process, the public involvement for the LRTP may also include any or all of the following techniques:

1. Information dissemination, notification of meeting, publication of proposed plans will be integral elements of the public involvement process.
2. The Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) will initiate a major LRTP update process as required by federal regulations (as a minimum, once every five years for air quality attainment areas). Elements of the Plan, and/or amendments will meet all current Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA),

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) requirements.

A work program and schedule for the LRTP update process will be developed by the TCC and provided to the TAC for approval. It will be made available to the public for their information. The work program will detail the strategy for the Plan update process including work elements and a tentative schedule. The TCC and TAC may elect to receive public comment and involvement on the work program.

3. Proactive participation techniques may be employed to involve citizens and provide fuller access to information and technical data on the Transportation Plan. The technique may include, but not be limited to; public meetings/hearings, surveys, focus groups, newsletters, public service announcements, charrette, transportation advisory group, mass media, etc.
4. Public meeting's may be held to: formulate a vision for the Transportation Plan development; provide the public background information on the metropolitan transportation system and other issues as well as the proposed framework of the Transportation Plan update process; and to receive citizen input.
5. Public meetings (forums) designed to solicit public comment may be held at various locations around the metropolitan area to encourage the greatest public participation. Public meetings will be held at a location, which is accessible to persons with disabilities and preferably located on a transit route.
6. Copies of the draft Transportation Plan will be distributed to the member jurisdictions, citizen groups and agencies, and will also be placed in the local libraries. Notification of the draft Transportation Plan may be provided via:
 - Asheville Citizens-Times
 - Mountain Express
 - UNCA Banner
 - Black Mountain News
 - Hendersonville Times News
 - Asheville Government Channel TV
 - Buncombe Government Channel TV

- Haywood Government Channel TV
- Henderson Government Channel TV
- Henderson County E-newsletter
- City of Asheville Home Page
- City of Asheville E-newsletter
- MPO Home page
- The Smoky Mountain News
- Enterprise Mountaineer

The notification will inform the public of the availability of the draft Long Range Transportation Plan for review and comment where to send written comments, and addresses and phone numbers of contact persons. The notices also will include an announcement that states that persons with disabilities will be accommodated. Special provisions will be made if notified 48 hours in advance (i.e. having available large print documents, audio material, someone proficient in sign language, a translator, or other provisions as requested). Additionally, the notice will inform the public that copies of the draft Transportation Plan are on file for public review at the City of Asheville Engineering Department, The member government's municipal offices, available in a PDF format for downloading from the FBRMPO homepage and at branch libraries throughout the area.

7. The public comment period will be for a minimum 30-day period, effective from the date of the public notice publication. Written comments will be received during the comment period and will be directed to the FBRMPO. The MPO's contact person, phone number and e-mail address will be included in the public notice.
8. Any significant revisions to the Long Range Transportation Plan will also be subject to public comment process as described in this policy.
9. Involvement of the public as key decision points may be desirable. Decision points are those stages where the TAC may consider endorsement of the work in progress or take action on particular work elements. These may include some of the following:
 - Formulation of vision, goals and objectives
 - Review of multi-modal goals and elements
 - Review and approval of socio-economic and demographic projections

- Review and determination of transportation deficiencies
- Evaluation of alternatives and selection of preferred option

3. Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program

Minimum Transportation Improvement Program Public Involvement Procedure

After consideration and adoption by the TAC, the draft Regional Priority List will be published for a minimum two week (14-day) public comment period and the notice will be published using the following resources:

- Asheville Citizens-Times
- Mountain Express
- UNCA Banner
- Black Mountain News
- Hendersonville Times News
- Asheville Government Channel TV
- Buncombe Government Channel TV
- Haywood Government Channel TV
- Henderson Government Channel TV
- Henderson County E-newsletter
- City of Asheville Home Page
- City of Asheville E-newsletter
- MPO Home page
- The Smoky Mountain News
- Enterprise Mountaineer

The same process shall be held for the public comment on the MTIP as on the Regional Priority List, except the minimum public comment period on the MTIP shall be 30 days. Written comments will be received during the comment period and will be directed to the FBRMPO. The MPO's contact person, phone number and e-mail address will be included in the public notice. The FBRMPO public participation process will meet all FTA standards for public involvement in transit planning and will assemble all comments regarding transit and other transportation considerations for the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC shall hold at least one public hearing for the Transportation Plan.

Overview

The Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) is the document that describes the funding and scheduling of transportation improvement projects (highway, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit capital and operating assistance) using State and federal funds. The MTIP serves as the project selection document for transportation projects and, therefore, is the implementation mechanism by which the objectives of the Transportation Plan are reached. The Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act (ISTEA) mandates an opportunity for public review of the MTIP. The following is the proposed public involvement procedure for the French Broad River Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program.

The MTIP and the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) must match exactly in projects, schedule, and scope, for projects to move forward with federal funding. It is therefore critical that close coordination be held with the State to assure that both parties are in agreement with the program and thus allow projects and programs (including transit elements) to move forward. The MTIP and STIP are planning documents and do not include design details. It is further critical to note that once programmed in the MTIP and STIP, activities such as land use decisions by the public and private sectors, scheduling, environmental analysis, design and other activities begin take place. Therefore the program should be carefully thought out, and not casually changed.

Introduction

The MTIP and STIP are on a two year cycle. In the first year, the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO) will prepare a Regional Projects Priority Needs List (PNL) which lays out the projects desired to be included in the last year's of the program. Further, should the MPO desire to consider a change in the schedule or scope of a project, this should be clearly communicated at this time. As the MTIP and STIP are fiscally constrained documents, any moving forward of, or increases in current projects must identify a corresponding desired delay in projects also within the area.

The Regional Projects Priority Needs List shall be provided to the State for consideration in inclusion in the draft STIP. The FBRMPO shall coordinate with the State as to project changes / additions desired by the MPO. Upon development of the draft STIP, the State shall provide a

subset of the STIP that covers the FBRMPO area to the MPO. It is anticipated that the resulting document be appropriate to be released as the draft MTIP for public input.

Should there be substantial problems with the draft STIP in the eyes of FBRMPO, the MPO shall immediately open discussions with the State on the discrepancies. The TCC shall recommend to the TAC what should be used for the MTIP, and the public involvement process.

Public Involvement Process

- 1 .The FBRMPO TCC will develop a draft Regional Priority Needs List from the Local Project Priorities of the MPO jurisdictions. Each MPO municipality and county should provide to the MPO their priorities for consideration. These may be developed as each governing agency sees fit (from example, they may come from staff, the elected boards, or the elected boards with public involvement).
2. After consideration and adoption by the TAC, the draft Regional Priority Needs List will be published for a minimum two-week (14-day) public comment period and the notice will be advertised using the following resources:
 - Asheville Citizens-Times
 - Mountain Express
 - UNCA Banner
 - Black Mountain News
 - Hendersonville Times News
 - Asheville Government Channel TV
 - Buncombe Government Channel TV
 - Haywood Government Channel TV
 - Henderson Government Channel TV
 - Henderson County E-newsletter
 - City of Asheville Home Page
 - City of Asheville E-newsletter
 - MPO Home page
 - The Smoky Mountain News
 - Enterprise Mountaineer

The notices for the public comment period and the public hearing will include an announcement that states that persons with disabilities will be accommodated. Special provisions will be made if notified 48 hours in advance (i.e. having available large print documents, audio material, someone proficient in sign language, a translator or other provisions as requested). The Regional Priority List will be on file for review at the City of Asheville Engineering Department, The municipal offices of MPO member governments, available in a PDF format for downloading from the FBRMPO homepage and at branch libraries throughout the area. Written comments will be received during the comment period and will be directed to the FBRMPO. The FBRMPO's contact person, phone number and e-mail address will be included in the public notice. The FBRMPO will assemble all comments and forward comments to the TAC.

3. The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) will hold a public hearing on the draft Priority Needs List. The public hearing will be held at a location which is accessible to persons with disabilities. The TAC will approve a final Regional Priority List after considering the public comments received. The Priority Needs List shall be submitted to the NCDOT at or before the NCDOT public hearings for input into the STIP. The TAC may elect to open a dialogue with the State on the priorities.
4. The State shall produce a draft STIP and provide a subset of that document to FBRMPO for consideration as the draft MTIP. TCC will develop review the document and recommend to the TAC if it is appropriate to be used as the draft MTIP. Should the TCC and TAC approve the document, it will become the draft MTIP.
5. The Transportation Advisory Committee will publish the draft MTIP for public review and comment. Copies of a draft MTIP will be distributed to TCC and TAC members. Each jurisdiction will also have copies available for public review. The draft MTIP will follow the same notification procedures as outlined above for the Regional Priority List, excepting that the minimum public comment period shall be 30 days, and that the TAC shall hold at least one public hearing for the MTIP.
6. The public comments will be assembled and presented to the FBRMPO, TCC and TAC. The TAC will hold a public hearing on the draft MTIP. The public hearing will be held at a location

which is accessible to persons with disabilities. Public comments will be addressed and considered in the adoption of the MTIP.

7. Amendments to MTIP will be available for public review and comment, if they make a substantial change to the MTIP. A substantial change is classified as the addition or deletion of a project with an implementation cost exceeding \$1 million. Public comment on project additions or deletions of less than \$1 million may be sought at the discretion of the TAC by majority vote. As long as a project's description, scope or expected environmental impact have not materially changed, the TAC may approve changes to project funding without a separate public meeting.
8. Written public comments and their responses will be published as an appendix to the final MTIP.

4. Air Quality Conformity Determination

Introduction

Should the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO) become designated as non-attainment for air quality, and become required to make a conformity determination on its Transportation Plan, the following shall apply. The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) assists the MPO in making a conformity determination by performing a systems level conformity analysis on the highway portion of the Financial Element of the MPO's Transportation Plan. The Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program is a subset of the Transportation Plan and is therefore covered by the conformity analysis.

Public Involvement Procedure for the Air Quality Determination

1. The FBRMPO in conjunction and cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Transportation will prepare an air quality conformity analysis for the FBRMPO.
2. The FBRMPO Technical Coordinating Committee will receive the draft Conformity Report from NCDOT, review it, and forward it to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC).

The Transportation Advisory Committee will then publish the draft Conformity Report for public review and comment.

3. Copies of a draft Conformity Report will be distributed to TAC members. Each jurisdiction will also have copies available for public review. Notices regarding the draft Air Quality Conformity Report will be advertised by the FBRMPO using the following resources:

- Asheville Citizens-Times
- Mountain Express
- UNCA Banner
- Black Mountain News
- Hendersonville Times News
- Asheville Government Channel TV
- Buncombe Government Channel TV
- Haywood Government Channel TV
- Henderson Government Channel TV
- Henderson County E-newsletter
- City of Asheville Home Page
- City of Asheville E-newsletter
- MPO Home page
- The Smoky Mountain News
- Enterprise Mountaineer

The notice will inform the public that a draft Conformity Report has been published by the FBRMPO and that copies are available for review at the City of Asheville Engineering Department, municipal offices of MPO member governments available in a PDF format for downloading from the FBRMPO homepage and at branch libraries throughout the area. The notices will include an announcement that states that persons with disabilities will be accommodated. Special provisions will be made if notified 48 hours in advance (i.e. having available large print documents, audio material, someone proficient in sign language, a translator or other provisions as requested).

4. The public review period will be for a minimum three-week (21-day) period, effective from the date of public notice publication. Written comment will be received during the public review period, and will be directed to the FBRMPO. The FBRMPO contact person, phone number and e-mail will be included in the public notice.

5. The public comments will be assembled and presented to the FBRMPO TAC. The TAC will hold a public hearing on the draft Air Quality Conformity Report. The public hearing will be held at a location which is accessible to persons with disabilities and which is located on a transit route. Public comments will be addressed and considered in the Air Quality Conformity Determination.

6. The FBRMPO, being a maintenance area will provide additional opportunity for public comment on any revisions to the draft Conformity Report (if the final Conformity Report is significantly different than the one which was made available for public comment by the MPO, and raises new material issues, which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen for the public review notifications).

7. The Air Quality Determination is valid for three years, unless changes are made to the Transportation Plan (or MTIP) that would have an impact on the air quality analysis. If such changes are made a new analysis needs to be conducted, including the public involvement procedure outlined above.

5. Planning Work Program

Introduction

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) requires that each Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) prepare an annual work program known as the Planning Work Program (PWP). The PWP must identify the MPO planning tasks to be undertaken with the use of federal transportation funds, including highway and transit.

Purpose

The purpose of public involvement in the PWP process is to keep the public apprised of and to receive input on the planning activities to be undertaken by the Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Public Involvement Process

1 The Distribution Formula for FTA Section 5303 (Formerly Section 8) and FHWA Planning Funds for the appropriate federal fiscal year are submitted to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) for approval. The TAC meetings are open to the public and comments on the Distribution Formula may be received at this time.

2. The local jurisdictions will prepare a list of tasks and funding for the federal fiscal year according to the approved Distribution Formula. These lists are submitted to the FBRMPO for compilation into a draft Planning Work Program

3. The draft Planning Work Program is reviewed by the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC). The TCC meetings are open to the public. The TCC then endorses a draft PWP and forwards the document to the TAC.

4. The draft PWP is then reviewed by the TAC. Public comments may be provided at this time. The draft is sent to the Public Transportation Division for comments.

5. The final PWP comes back again to the TAC for approval. Upon TAC approval, the PWP is then forwarded on to the State and FHWA/FTA.

6. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Provisions

All notices for planning activities of the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization will include an announcement that states that persons with disabilities will be accommodated. Special provisions will be made if notified 48 hours in advance (i.e. having available large print documents, audio material, someone proficient in sign language, a translator or other provisions requested).

Notices for the public comment period and the public hearing will be advertised using the following resources:

- Asheville Citizens-Times
- Mountain Express
- UNCA Banner
- Black Mountain News
- Hendersonville Times News
- Asheville Government Channel TV
- Buncombe Government Channel TV
- Haywood Government Channel TV
- Henderson Government Channel TV
- Henderson County E-newsletter
- City of Asheville Home Page
- City of Asheville E-newsletter
- MPO Home page
- The Smoky Mountain News
- Enterprise Mountaineer

Public meetings will be held in locations accessible to persons with disabilities and will be located near or on a transit route if possible.

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/pub_inv/g_and_a.htm

23 United States Code

Title 23 - Highway

Sec. 128. Public hearings

(a) Any State highway department which submits plans for a Federal-aid highway project involving the bypassing of or, going through any city, town, or village, either incorporated or unincorporated, shall certify to the Secretary that it has had public hearings, or has afforded the opportunity for such hearings, and has considered the economic and social effects of such a location, its impact on the environment, and its consistency with the goals and objectives of such urban planning as has been promulgated by the community. Any State highway department which submits plans for an Interstate System project shall certify to the Secretary that it has had public hearings at a convenient location, or has afforded the opportunity for such hearings for the purpose of enabling persons in rural areas through or contiguous to whose property the highway will pass to express any objections they may have to the proposed locations of such highway. Such certification shall be accompanied by a report which indicates the consideration given to the economic, social, environmental and other effects of the plan or highway location or design and various alternatives which were raised during the hearing or which were otherwise considered.

(b) When hearings have been held under subsection (a), the State highway department shall submit a copy of the transcript of said hearings to the Secretary, together with the certification and report.

An effective public involvement process provides for an open exchange of information and ideas between the public and transportation decisionmakers. The overall objective of an area's public involvement process is that it be proactive, provide complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and opportunities for early and continuing involvement (23CFR450.212(a) and 450.316(b)(1)). It also provides mechanisms for the agency or agencies to solicit public comments and ideas, identify circumstances and impacts which may not have been known or anticipated by public agencies, and, by doing so, to build support among the public who are stakeholders in transportation investments which impact their communities.

Six useful key elements in planning for effective public involvement are: (1) Clearly-defined purpose and objectives for initiating a public dialogue on transportation plans, programs, and projects, (2) Identification of specifically who the affected public and other stakeholder groups are with respect to the plan(s), program(s), and project(s) under development, (3) Identification of techniques for engaging the public in the process, (4) Notification procedures which effectively target affected groups, (5) Education and assistance techniques which result in an accurate and full public understanding of the transportation problem, potential solutions, and obstacles and opportunities within various solutions to the problem, and, (6) Follow through by public agencies demonstrating that decisionmakers seriously considered public input.

A good indicator of an effective public involvement process is a well informed public which feels it has opportunities to contribute input into transportation decisionmaking processes through a broad array of involvement opportunities at all stages of decisionmaking. In contrast, an ineffective process is one that relies on one or two public meetings or hearings to obtain input immediately prior to decisionmaking on developed draft plans and programs. Public meetings that are well attended, frequent news coverage on transportation issues, public forums where a broad representation of diverse interests is in attendance, and plans, TIPs, MIS alternatives, and project designs which reflect an understanding and consideration of public input are all indicators that the public involvement process is effective.

The ISTEA specifically identifies various segments of the public and the transportation industry that must be given the opportunity to participate, including "citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, other affected employee representatives, private providers of transportation and other interested parties" (e.g., 23U.S.C. 134(h)). The FHWA and FTA define the public broadly as including all individuals or groups who are potentially affected by transportation decisions. This includes anyone who resides in, has interest in, or does business in a given area which may be affected by transportation decisions. The public includes both individuals and organized groups. In addition, it is important to provide similar opportunities for the participation of all private and public providers of transportation services, including, but not limited to, the trucking and rail freight industries, rail passenger industry, taxi cab operators, and all conventional and unconventional transit service operators. Finally, those persons traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems such as low income or minority households and the elderly should be explicitly encouraged to participate in the public involvement process.

[10] How do the public involvement requirements for project development and the NEPA process apply to public involvement for major transportation investment studies (MIS)?

An MPO's overall public involvement process should describe the approach to be used to involve the public in any MIS conducted in that metropolitan planning area, regardless of whether the lead agency for the MIS is the MPO itself, the State DOT, or the transit operator. At the start of the interagency consultation, the cooperating agencies need to tailor a specific public involvement strategy for the MIS. The strategy should engage the public in the consideration of the purpose and need for a major investment as well as in the development and evaluation of all alternatives. If the MIS incorporates development of a NEPA document, the public involvement strategy must comply with the public involvement provisions of 23 CFR Part 771 or 40 CFR Part 622.

13] How can State DOTs and MPOs demonstrate "explicit consideration and response to public input," as required by 23 CFR 450.212 and 23 CFR 450.316?

State DOTs and MPOs should incorporate input from the public into decisionmaking, when warranted, with the understanding that not all parties will get exactly what they want. However, the public must receive assurance that its input is valued and considered in decisionmaking so that it feels that the time and energy expended in getting involved is meaningful and worthwhile. To do this, State DOTs and MPOs should both maintain records of public involvement activities, input, comments, and concerns as well as document requests for information and responses to input received during the public involvement process. Agencies can keep records and provide feedback in a variety of ways. Techniques for providing feedback include: regularly published newsletters, special inserts into general circulation newspapers, radio programs, telephone hotlines with project updates, public access television programs, and reports or publications describing how projects or programs are progressing.

Under the Environmental Protection Agency's transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR 51), when an MPO receives significant comments on a metropolitan transportation plan or TIP from the public or through the interagency consultation process, it must provide a summary, analysis, and report on how the comments were responded to as part of the final metropolitan transportation plan and TIP.

- Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) are prepared for federal actions that have a significant effect on the human and natural environment.
- Draft EIS (DEIS) and Final EIS (FEIS) are disclosure documents that provide a full description of the proposed project, the existing environment, and analysis of the anticipated beneficial and adverse environmental effects of all reasonable alternatives.
- Categorical Exclusions (CE) are prepared for federal actions that do not have a significant human and natural environmental effect.
- Environmental Assessments (EA) are prepared for federal actions where it is not clearly known how significant the environmental impact might be. If, after preparing an Environmental Assessment, it is determined that the project's impact is significant, an Environmental Impact Statement is then prepared. If not, a finding of "no significant impact" is documented.

- Record of Decision (ROD) is a concise decision document for an environmental impact statement that states the decision (selected alternative or choice), other alternatives considered, and mitigation adopted for the selected alternative or choice.
- Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is a statement indicating that a project was found to have no significant impacts on the quality of the human environment and for which an environmental statement will therefore not be prepared.

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